

# St Paul of the Cross Catholic Primary School

Milnthorpe Road, Chapel Lane, Burtonwood, WA5 4PN

**Inspection dates** 24–25 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- From typical starting points on entry to Reception, pupils do not make enough progress overall and so the standards they reach at the end of Year 6 remain broadly average. The legacy of weaker teaching in the past has yet to be fully overcome. As a result, pupils' achievement is variable across different areas of the school.
- The quality of teaching over time has not always been as good as it should have been. It has not always fully challenged pupils of all abilities to make good or better progress. A significant amount of teaching still requires improvement.
- Some pupils' writing skills are not sufficiently developed to enable them to express their learning effectively.
- Aspects of leadership and management, such as communication with parents over their children's progress, and the extent of middle leader involvement in improvement actions, are underdeveloped. The raised expectations are not fully established across all areas of the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, staff and governors are highly committed to improving both achievement and the quality of teaching and they are clear about how to do this. As a result, past differences in the progress of different groups of pupils are being rapidly closed.
- Much current teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils' attendance has improved considerably over the last year as a result of sustained work by the school.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and well cared for in the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons and in a range of shorter visits. Two observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work was undertaken.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and to parents who picked up their children from school in the afternoon. Inspectors took account of 26 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as 12 questionnaires from staff.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the school's records of pupils' performance, evaluations of the quality of teaching over time and its short- and long-term plans for improvement. Safeguarding procedures were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read and checked the school's information about progress in reading.

## Inspection team

Nigel Cromey–Hawke, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kirsty Haw	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school with more boys than girls.
- Almost all pupils are White British, with a very few of minority ethnic heritages. There are hardly any pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been considerable changes in staffing over the last two years, including a period of temporary leadership of the school, followed by the appointment of a new headteacher in January 2013.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good across the school by:
  - ensuring that pupils' learning does not slow due to a lack of pace within lessons and results in them losing interest
  - ensuring that tasks are sufficiently challenging for pupils of all abilities in order to help them to make good or better progress in their learning
  - using information on pupils' previous performance more widely to plan activities that meet pupils' learning needs
  - checking more regularly pupils' understanding and progress in lessons, for example through questioning, so that tasks can be quickly adapted to meet their changing needs
  - ensuring that high-quality marking and advice are evident in all classes and that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Further develop pupils' skills in writing across all subjects, notably in the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, so that they can better demonstrate their learning.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - developing the role of middle leaders, especially in checking the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility and in their involvement with development planning
  - communicating more frequently with parents about their children's progress
  - consolidating the higher expectations across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Over the last three years, pupils' standards in English and mathematics have varied considerably across classes within Key Stages 1 and 2, reflecting weaker teaching and considerable staffing changes.
- Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. Children make expected levels of progress overall through Reception and often good progress in their personal and creative development. This is helped by the clear routines for behaviour and the extended opportunities for play and exploration provided by the newly refurbished outdoor learning area.
- Pupils' standards by the end of both Years 2 and 6 have been broadly average over the last three years, and last year fell to just below average in Year 6 in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence and the school's tracking of pupils' learning show that the achievement of the vast majority of pupils across the school is accelerating. Indeed, pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to reach broadly average attainment in English and above-average standards in mathematics.
- The teaching of reading has been completely restructured by the recently appointed headteacher. The Year 1 national screening check of pupils' use of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to help in their reading shows that the vast majority reached slightly above expected levels last year and pupils in the current Year 2 class are working at above-expected levels for their age. Standards in reading at Year 6 are broadly average.
- Many pupils are now making accelerated progress and catching up on lost ground. The drive to improve the quality of learning has not yet been effective across all year groups, however, and achievement still requires improvement, especially in lower Key Stage 2. Past, weaker performance by some groups of pupils has been targeted with some success and, although gaps remain in the achievement of some year groups in writing, lost ground is being rapidly recovered. The progress being made by the most able pupils, which in the past has been no better than expected, is also improving strongly. Many of this group are on track to reach above national expectations in national testing in Year 6 at the higher levels, especially in mathematics.
- The achievement of the very small number of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is similarly variable. Last year, those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 were some two years behind the level of other pupils in that year group, especially in writing, and their progress was no better than expected. The attainment and progress of this group have improved this year and the gaps between their performance and the performance of other pupils in English and mathematics are closing rapidly.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs follows a similar pattern. Pockets of inadequate progress in the past have been identified and the school has responded strongly with a review of how it meets these pupils' needs. The progress of this group is now at least as expected and in some cases good. The success of the school's work in this area was seen during the inspection in some good quality teaching and learning within specialist support sessions for such pupils.
- Over time achievement has been uneven. Standards have not risen fast enough across the school since the previous inspection and still require improvement. Raised expectations are, however, bringing about rapid changes for the better.
- Senior leaders are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils and recognise what needs to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve well.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the past has not been good and, currently, some still requires improvement. Occasionally, it is outstanding.

- Procedures for checking on pupils' progress, more challenging individual pupil learning targets, raised expectations and staff training, have all begun to eliminate the effects of weaker teaching in the past. Staff are committed to these changes, although classroom practice still varies in its effectiveness.
- Pupils achieve well when teachers make good use of the information on pupils' past performance to structure activities that meet pupils' needs and engage their interest. Pupils' learning is then regularly checked, often by the capable team of teaching assistants, and tasks adapted to challenge pupils' understanding and move their learning forward.
- In English in Year 4, for example, outstanding learning was evident as a result of lively, humorous teaching, and constant support and challenge provided to pupils to improve their persuasive writing skills. These practices are not always evident in some activities within the Reception class, however, nor in other classes throughout the school. In addition, the lack of effective questioning further weakens the levels of challenge provided to some pupils.
- On occasions, pupils lose interest as the slow pace of learning fails to keep them interested. Similarly, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are sometimes still too low, and the level of challenge does not promote good or better progress.
- The teaching of reading has been variable over time but is now normally good. There are well-structured daily sessions on letters and sounds and guided reading sessions that give pupils the tools to move their learning forward.
- The school has entered into partnerships with its local high schools and uses these to good effect to provide good learning opportunities for its most able pupils, especially in English and mathematics and to prepare them for moving to the next stage of their learning.
- The school has focused upon extending opportunities for different types of writing across all subject areas, but this is not always skilfully delivered. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always properly developed in some classes and opportunities to extend writing across a wide range of subjects are underdeveloped. As a result, pupils are not always able to express their learning as effectively as they should and their attainment and achievement in these areas are weaker in some cases.
- Marking is also variable across classes. In some cases it is of a high quality and contributes well to pupils' learning. On occasions, however, it lacks detail and pupils are not always fully aware of how to improve their work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Around the school, in gatherings such as assemblies and where teaching engages pupils fully in their learning, behaviour is often exemplary.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and pupils clearly respect one another and get on well with each other and with adults. As a result, the school is a well-ordered, warm, inclusive and harmonious community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- All the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are well cared for. This view was confirmed by the findings of the school's own parental survey and also through the discussions with parents during the inspection.
- Nearly all pupils show good attitudes to learning in lessons, although some can wander off-task on occasions. Pupils listen well to teachers and other adults and their behaviour on visits outside school is often exemplary, as testified by numerous letters of praise from the public.
- Pupils take on many responsibilities for the daily running of the school. The school council feels their views are well considered and they take pride in their contributions to the provision for outdoor learning areas for Reception and the main school, and for the Young Apprentice event for charity.
- Bullying is rare and when it occurs pupils say it is dealt with rapidly and effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and know who to go to if they have a

problem. Pupils' understanding of e-safety is well developed.

- Attendance in the past has been below average and the levels of persistent absence high. Over the last two years, attendance has risen and is currently above average with persistent absence very low. This demonstrates the school's raised expectations, robust challenges to parents and pupils' support for the school. There have been no exclusions for many years.

## **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Building upon the start made during the temporary leadership of the school, the current headteacher is driving improvement forward with great energy and skill. Teaching and pupils' attendance have been improved, staffing renewed and achievement raised. Staff morale is high and staff are unanimously in favour of the school's new direction, as shown within the staff inspection questionnaire. The capacity of the school for sustained improvement is, therefore, good.
- The school has benefited from enhanced support from the local authority during the period of its leadership changes. It has also benefited from the sharing and checking of its assessments of pupils' learning with other schools. These partnership arrangements have confirmed the accuracy and rigour of its judgements on pupils' achievement.
- There are comprehensive strategies in place to enable the school to gauge accurately how well it is doing. In addition, there are well focused whole-school plans for driving further improvement. Due to the changes in roles and expectations, however, the monitoring role of subject leaders and their involvement in planning for further change is currently underdeveloped.
- The school has reviewed the way in which it uses its pupil premium funding and now utilises it to better effect than previously to support the training and working hours of teaching assistants who provide support for this group of pupils.
- The primary school sports funding is used to good effect to provide specialist coaching for pupils in areas not otherwise possible and in the training of staff. The impact is evident in increased participation rates in sports and in the many additional after-school and inter-school activities, such as rugby and handball.
- The curriculum has been significantly reviewed to incorporate new legislation and focus firmly upon developing basic skills and extending pupils' experiences of the wider world. It supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, especially through the links with international disaster areas. A wide range of visits and visitors complements the delivery of the classroom curriculum, as well as supporting the outdoor classroom within the school grounds.
- Responses through Parent View show that some parents have concerns over the school's reporting on their children's progress. Inspection evidence shows that the school meets minimum requirements in this respect. However, the school's communications with families over pupils' progress have yet to reflect the frequency of its updated checks on learning and parents are therefore not receiving as much information as they could on their children's progress. In all other respects, the school's engagement with parents and the local community is good.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body takes an active interest in the school and has played an important part in steering it through a period of significant change.
  - Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school, especially of the school's performance in relation to national comparisons. They oversee how the school uses its additional funding for pupil premium groups and the impact it has upon raising their achievement, supporting the changes made in this respect last year that have proven to be more effective. They challenge the leadership of the school over its performance, for example supporting the robust performance management used by the headteacher to bring about improvements in teaching and ensuring that is meaningfully linked to any increases in pay.
  - The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met and that the school rejects all forms of discrimination.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111367
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	443890

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	William Garner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dominic Vernon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 224686
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